

The Connecticut Valley  
Historical Society

Springfield, Massachusetts

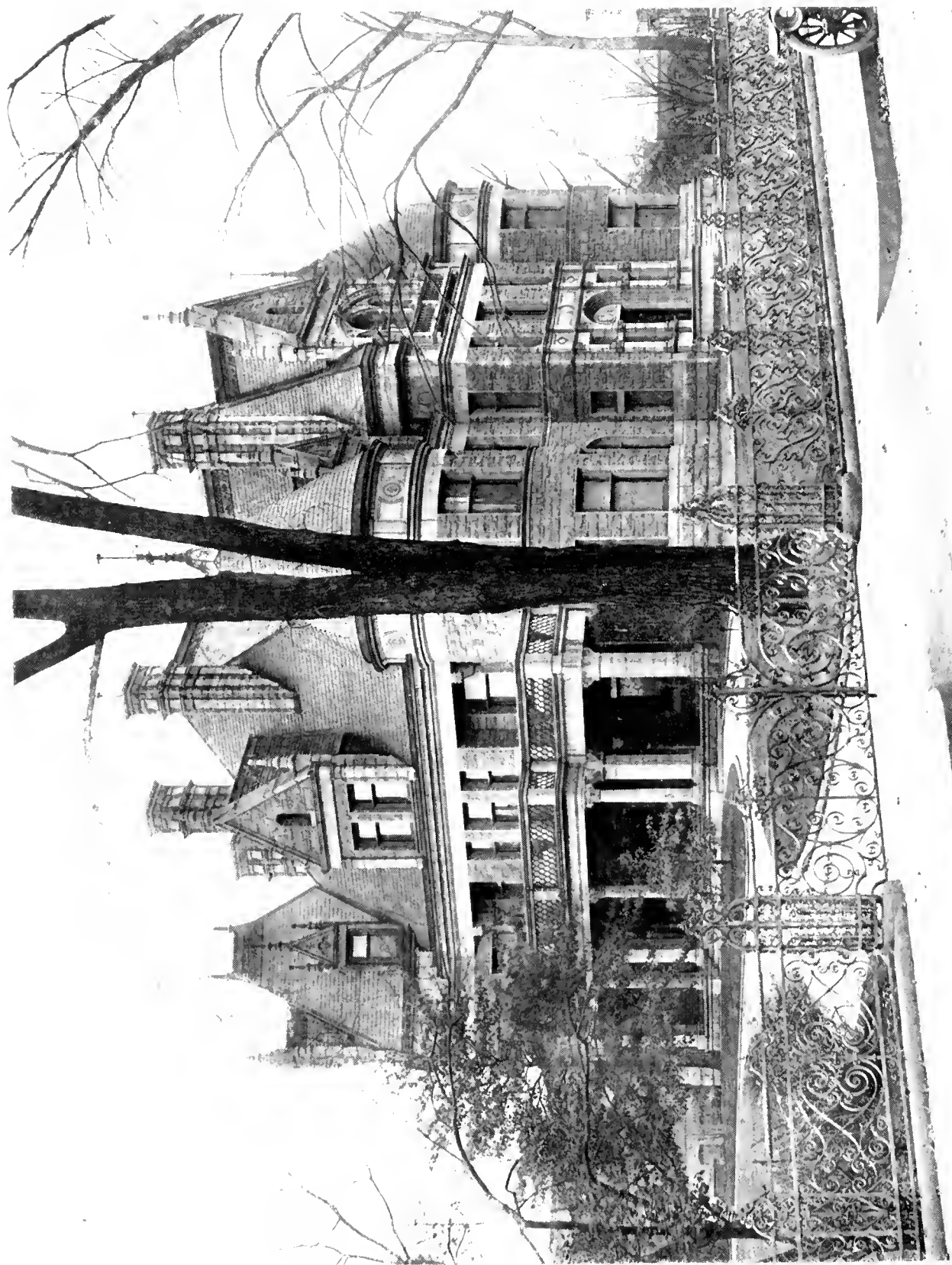




THE CONNECTICUT VALLEY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS



# Connecticut Valley Historical Society

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*Springfield*  *Massachusetts*

A Maintenance Fund  
*of*  
One Hundred Thousand Dollars  
to be Established by  
Members *and* Friends *of the*  
Society

# Committee

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W. F. ADAMS, *President of the Society*

EDWARD S. BREWER

OSCAR B. IRELAND

CHARLES H. BARROWS

COL. JOHN L. RICE

WILLIAM G. WHEAT

J. BREWER CORCORAN

CLIFFORD B. POTTER

H. CURTIS ROWLEY

COL. STANHOPE E. BLUNT

COL. STANHOPE E. BLUNT, *Secretary*

OSCAR B. IRELAND, *Treasurer*



*Springfield Republican*     *a*

*Springfield Union*     *b*

*Springfield Homestead*     *c*

*Springfield Daily News*     *d*



*Residence of the late D. B. Wesson  
Gift to the Connecticut Valley Historical Society, Springfield, Massachusetts*



**Wesson \$1,000,000 Gift**  
TO  
*The* CONNECTICUT VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MAPLE STREET MANSION OFFERED

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J. PIERPONT MORGAN CONTRIBUTES \$10,000

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*Provision That the Society Raise Endowment Fund of \$100,000  
for Maintenance—Finest Home in the Country  
for Such an Organization*

a **T**HE imposing residence of the late Daniel B. Wesson at 50 Maple street has been given to the Connecticut Valley Historical Society, according to an announcement made at the meeting of the directors of the association at the Union Trust Company's building yesterday afternoon. The gift is provisional to the raising by the society of a permanent fund of \$100,000, the income of which is to be used for maintenance. J. Pierpont Morgan has already offered to give \$10,000 toward this fund and the gift of the general committee of the 275th anniversary, amounting to \$250, is also available. The committee appointed to raise the fund consists of William F. Adams, president of the society, Edward S. Brewer, Oscar B. Ireland, Charles H. Barrows, Col. John L. Rice, William G. Wheat, James Brewer Corcoran, Clifford B. Potter, H. Curtis Rowley and Col. Stanhope E. Blunt.

According to the president of the society, the building is splendidly adapted for exhibiting the valuable collections that are now in possession of the society, or have been promised as soon as suitable accommodations could be provided. The recent exhibit in connection with the anniversary shows something of the wealth of material available. No changes will

be made in the building as none are needed. With the large number of rooms available the collections can be housed practically by themselves and in places ideally suited for them. This is a source of satisfaction to the Wesson heirs as well as to the society as the permanence of the house in its present form is assured for all time. The building will be by far the most costly owned by a historical society in the country. At Worcester the society there has just completed a new building that cost \$300,000. The Wesson house cost approximately \$1,000,000. The society will have no burden of taxes to meet, as buildings for such purposes come within the exempted list.

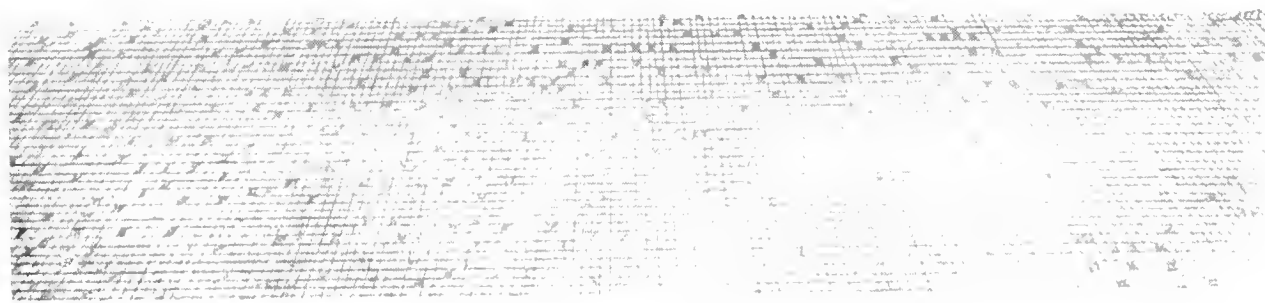
The house was built by the late D. B. Wesson, the noted manufacturer of the Smith & Wesson revolver. It is much the most expensive residence in the city and on the finest residential street, yet also so close to the center, the city library and the art museum, that it is very convenient for the purpose to which it is to be put. The building was about 10 years under construction and in every particular was the best that could be secured at any price. Bruce Price of New York was the architect. The material is Milford pink granite, the most durable stone that could be found.

The historical society was organized in 1876 and has a membership now of about 300. J. Pierpont Morgan is one of the life members. It was organized "to procure and preserve whatever may relate to the natural, civil, military, ecclesiastical and genealogical history of the country, and especially of the territory in the Connecticut valley, and also to prepare and preserve correct reports of annals of passing events of importance." The home of the society has been somewhat uncertain for years. At present it is using part of the art museum for some of its collections. It has a vast amount of material, however, that it has never had room to make available to the public. There are scores of people also who have said that they would be glad to contribute if there was a place suitable for their gifts. The society has issued



*Main Doorway*





*Carriage Doorway*



three volumes of "Papers and Proceedings." The first of 325 pages covers the years 1876 to 1881. The second of 309 pages covers the years 1882 to 1893. The third, covering 1894 to 1911, is now in press. It also issued in 1907 "Poets and Poetry of Springfield," and in 1909, "History of Springfield in Massachusetts for the Young," by Charles H. Barrows.

The public gifts of the Wessons to the city now amount to more than \$2,000,000. The Wesson memorial hospital cost \$400,000. The Wesson maternity hospital cost \$200,000. The two have also been endowed in the sum of \$450,000. This latest gift of the costly residence completes the list to date.

#### COSTLY AND MAGNIFICENT INTERIOR

The house, which was built in 1898, is set in spacious grounds and the interior corresponds in magnificence and costliness to the outside. The rooms throughout are high and large and finished with rare and beautiful woods. Mr. Wesson was a lover of beautiful woods and filled his home with rich specimens of native and foreign varieties. Beautiful tapestries and paintings enhance the richness of the rooms and the furniture is made to correspond with the woodwork. The walls above the wainscoting are covered with tapestries, frescoes or figured satin and there are lovely marble mantles and beautifully colored hangings. The floors are of quartered oak, with the exception of the salon, which has a floor of white mahogany.

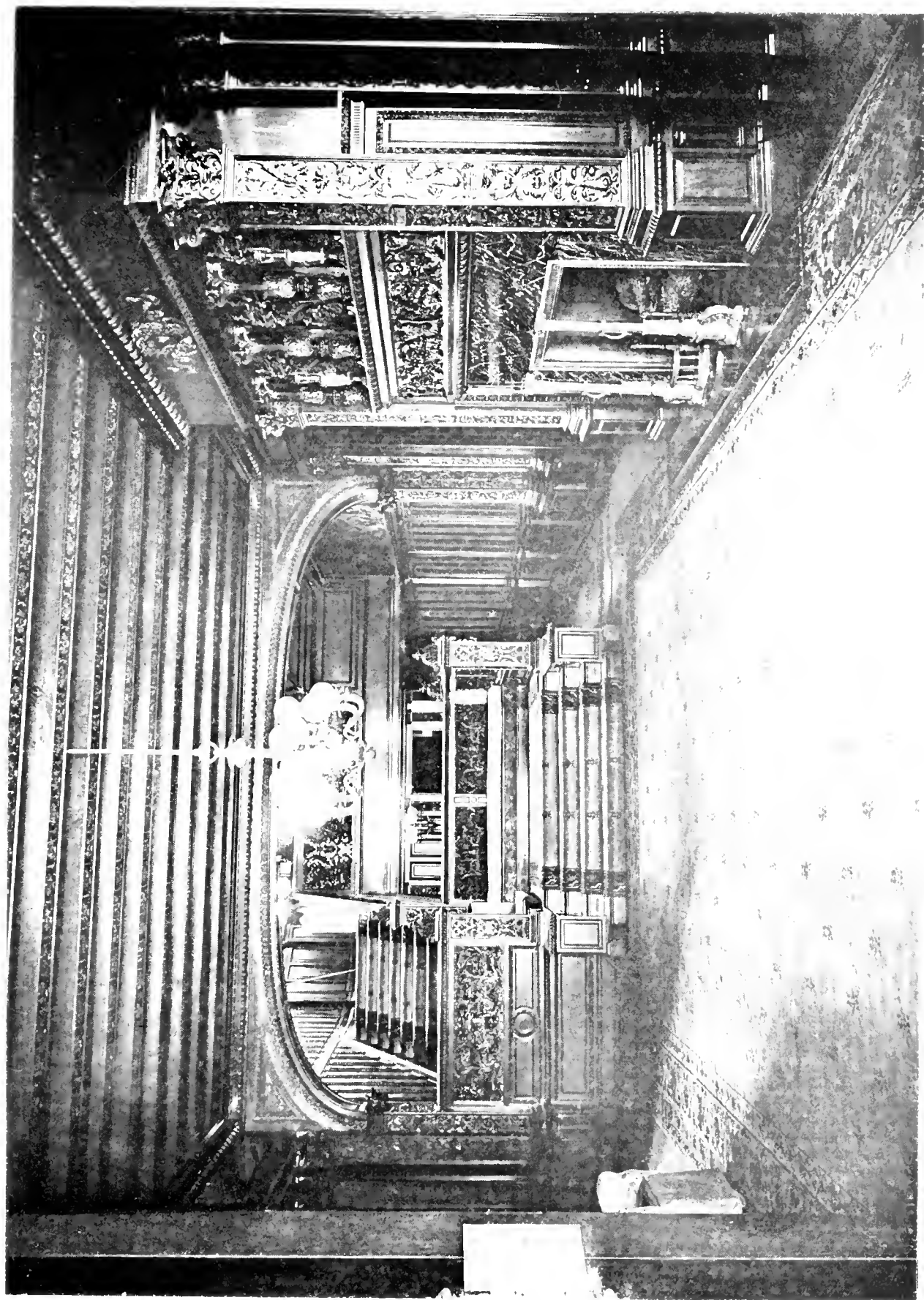
The house is built in the style of Louis XIV. Passing through the massive outer door and through the vestibule flanked with silver lamps, one enters a large hall, 20 by 30 feet. This hall is floored, wainscoted and ceiled with oak, except for small spaces near the ceiling, where tapestries are hung. A great fireplace with a mantel of Verde antique marble is on the right, and a heavy carved mirror hangs at the left. From the main hall extend side halls ornamented with carved oak

wainscotings and tapestry like the main hall. At the north of the hall is the reception room, finished in Greek style and wainscoted in satinwood. The walls are covered with green satin and the mantel is of rose aurora marble with an overmantel of satinwood. At the south of the main hall is the salon, finished in the style of Louis XV, with panels of white enameled cherry ornamented with gilt, and a floor of white mahogany. The ceiling is decorated with a beautiful figure painting by the artist Tojetti of New York, and there is a mantel of rose aurora marble. The salon and reception rooms are the same size, 19 by 22 feet, and each has a tower 15 feet in diameter at the corner farthest from the hall.

The large library, done in colonial style, is at the southwest corner of the first floor. The high wainscotings here are of oak and tapestry, and the north wall is covered with oak bookcases. The mantel is of Sienna marble and the ceiling is decorated with paintings and supported by oak beams. The dining-room leads out of a side hall at the right of the main staircase and is one of the richest rooms on the floor. It is finished in San Domingo mahogany and has a wainscoting of red wood about eight feet high, with the beautiful grain of the wood showing in long, smooth panels. A sideboard is built into the wall at the north end of the room and on the east side is a handsome table. The mantel, of mahogany and Verde antique marble, stands at the south side of the room. The predominating colors in the tapestry and hangings is green and this color is also brought out in the painting on the ceiling. The L-shaped butler's pantry is north of the dining-room and north of this is a large kitchen with coal and gas ranges, the former having a huge hood of glazed brick supported by iron beams in the ceiling. The storeroom and a pantry with a refrigerator built into the wall are east of the kitchen.

The beautiful staircase which leads from the head of the main hall has balustrades of heavy carving, and ascends





*Main Hall*



with several landings to the second floor. The staircase is surrounded with windows of art glass, and is arched with a skylight of the same on the third floor. On the second floor there are six spacious sleeping-rooms and four bathrooms, besides the upper hall. All the rooms are wainscoted, and the furniture of each room matches the woodwork of the room. Some of the most lovely woods in the house are to be seen on this floor. The hall is done in oak, and the north room is in Circassian walnut, a dark wood with a rich grain something like our black walnut. Above the wainscot the wall is covered here with golden bronze satin. The mantel is of Japanese marble. The west chamber is in bird's-eye maple, the door panels being especially handsome. The mantel is of pink Italian marble, and the walls are done in blue satin.

There are two chambers on the east side, one finished in white mahogany and old rose satin with a mantel of pink Sienna marble and the other finished in Circassian walnut with red satin and a Verde antique mantel. The room at the southeast corner is done in satinwood with green satin for a wall covering and a mantel of Mexican onyx. The room at the southwest corner contains one of the richest displays of rare wood in the house. It is finished in East Indian mahogany, a lovely wood with a pronounced grain and a varied color. The walls and hangings are of gold-colored satin and the mantel is of Sienna marble. The largest bathroom on the floor is situated between the two last-mentioned rooms. It is 12 feet by 12 and, like the others, is floored with mosaic and wainscoted with Sienna marble. The woodwork is of satinwood and the fittings are of silver.

The rooms on the third floor comprise six sleeping-rooms, a bathroom, a sitting-room, a storeroom and a linen closet, 13 feet square. The wainscoting here is of quartered oak and the rooms are larger than those in an ordinary house. Above the third floor hall, which is large, there is a garret which has been finished. The great basement of the house contains a

laundry, servants' bathroom and a vegetable closet of Mr. Wesson's own devising, in which the temperature is regulated by thermostat. The house is furnished with every modern convenience. It is heated with hot water from a furnace in the stables and fresh air is supplied from a large duct running down the front of the house, passing 11 feet under the basement floor and connecting with air shafts for the radiators, which are in the walls of the house except in the third floor, where they are inclosed in oak panels. The house is lighted with both gas and electricity and there are 30 buttons on the switchboard in the main hall which controls the system. There is a hydraulic elevator running from the basement to the third floor to complete the equipment.





*Third Landing, Main Hall*



## ANOTHER WESSON BENEVOLENCE

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The gift of the Wesson mansion in Maple street to the Connecticut Valley Historical Society, announcement of which was made yesterday by President W. F. Adams of the society, adds one more to the long list of benevolences to be credited to the estate of the late Daniel B. Wesson. This gift is from the surviving children of Mr. Wesson, the direct heirs to this property, and is in keeping with the philanthropic provisions made by their father before his death and in his will. The mansion, a very palace in design and construction, costing a round million dollars, with its spacious grounds, an acre in extent, is ideally adapted to the purposes of an historical library and museum in which may be preserved the priceless records and relics of the early history of the Connecticut valley and the no less important historical data of later periods.

It is a gift not only to the society, but to the entire population of the valley, and its value will be more and more realized with the lapse of years. The society is requested to raise \$100,000 for the maintenance of the property, and has already received from J. Pierpont Morgan a contribution of \$10,000 toward this fund. Mr. Morgan, whose ancestors were among the early settlers in the Connecticut valley, is a member of the society, and has manifested a keen interest in its object and work. The task of raising the remaining \$90,000 ought not to be difficult. Indeed, the public spirit which inspired the gift of this \$1,000,000 estate to so worthy a cause ought to be reflected in an immediate and generous response to the society's appeal for contributions to the maintenance fund.

Springfield will be especially proud of this new addition to its public institutions, and with Springfield the cities and towns of the Connecticut valley will unite in a feeling of gratitude to the Wesson heirs for this munificent benefaction.

## BUILDING BETTER THAN HE KNEW

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The good fortune of the Connecticut Valley Historical Society in receiving the gift of the magnificent Wesson house is generally pleasing. It is recognized as a peculiarly suitable disposition of an edifice which stands in a peculiar relation to the recent history of the city and which is peculiarly adapted to the purposes for which the historical society designs it. The general approval of the gift should leave no question as to the carrying out of the conditions or the understanding which is that the society raise a fund of \$100,000 for maintenance and care. The object is recognized as being so worthy of support that it is doubtful if a strong appeal has to be made to the public spirited people of the city and vicinity who are interested in the good work of the historical society and in its possibilities.

This disposition of the Wesson house is also a rather impressive example of the unexpected manner in which things often work out even in the brief history of a generation or two. The shrewdest and wisest men never know as they are planning and studying what is to be the ultimate development of that to which they are giving so much of their time and study. We may imagine that to the construction of this splendid dwelling the late Mr. Wesson gave much of the strong mental powers and of the keen business ability for which he was noted. We can fancy how the project grew in his mind, how carefully the details were worked out, and how at every step the plans were made with the consciousness that it was a home making. It was the working out of one of the most elevating of ambitions and a man puts much of his personality and of his feelings into a house which he is building for his home. In many ways it is often the most intelligible index to his character and to his nature.





*Library*



In the building few men stop to think of what is to ultimately become of the work in which they are engaged, but, even if there is a dream or a vision or an ambition, its uncertainties can not fail to be impressive. The purpose of even the greatest minds do not reach clearly beyond the grave. There is no telling how the ideas of one generation may adapt themselves to the conditions of another.

It is thus that sometimes men build better than they know at the time. Whether there is a Providence that works in the affairs of men or not it is a fact often noted that the results of individual endeavor are vastly greater than could be imagined and very much different. It is hardly possible that the late Mr. Wesson could have dreamed as he planned and carried to completion his beautiful residence that he was really providing a future home for the historical society. He knew that he was at least building well, and there is the lesson for the men of any generation. Good work is never lost. On the other hand, the results of it are always better than can be realized by him who works.



# Wesson Home is Bestowed

\$1,000,000

MANSION ON MAPLE STREET GIVEN TO  
CONNECTICUT VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

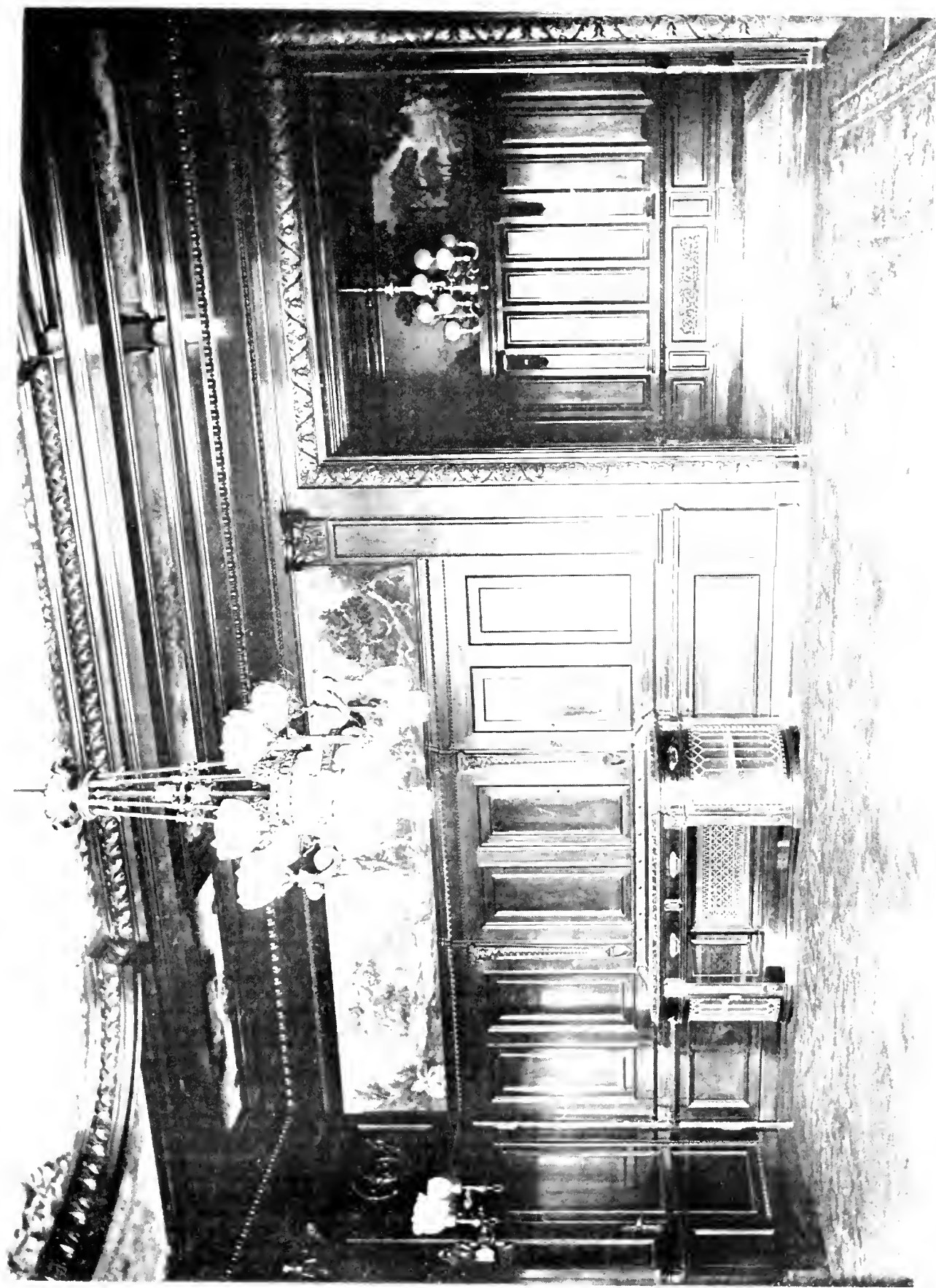
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MORGAN GIVES \$10,000

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*Only Condition Is That Organization Shall Raise  
\$100,000 for Maintenance*

d AT a meeting of the directors of the Connecticut Valley Historical Society held in the Union Trust Company building yesterday afternoon, W. F. Adams, president, announced the gift to the society by the heirs of the late Daniel B. Wesson of the residence, 50 Maple street. The property was the home of Mr. Wesson, the inventor and manufacturer of the Smith & Wesson pistol, and was his home at the time of his decease. It is located on Maple street, the finest residence street in this city, and at the same time it is near the business center. The lot includes about one acre of ground. The building was about 10 years in process of construction and was built by day work. The architect was Bruce Price of New York City. The material is Milford pink granite—the best that could be secured. The workmanship throughout the construction was as perfect as could be maintained. The building when finished and furnished and as now offered as a gift to the society cost the sum of about \$1,000,000. The only request made by the heirs is that the society raise the sum of \$100,000, the income to be used to maintain the property or estate intact and place beyond question the ability of the society to care for it. A gift of \$10,000 already toward this fund has been made by J. Pierpont Morgan of New York City, a member of the society.



*Dining Room*



The society was organized in 1876. It has a membership of about 300. The objects of the society are to procure and preserve whatever may relate to the natural, civil, military, ecclesiastical and genealogical history of the country, and especially of the territory in the Connecticut valley, and also to prepare and preserve correct reports of annals of passing events of importance.

The gifts of the late D. B. Wesson to the city are as follows: Wesson Memorial Hospital, which cost \$400,000; Wesson Maternity Hospital, which cost \$200,000; both endowed for \$450,000.

The sons of Mr. Wesson, Walter H. Wesson and Joseph H. Wesson, have beautiful homes which were built before the decease of D. B. Wesson and the residence is not desired by either of them. Mrs. Bull, the daughter, has recently built a home which is much more to her liking, so that the princely gift is made to the Connecticut Valley Historical Society, the requirement being only a fund of \$100,000 to secure the perfect maintenance of the property.

The Messrs. Wesson have been great benefactors to the city of Springfield and, including the present proposition, their gifts will mount into the millions.

The home of the Connecticut Valley Historical Society has been rather uncertain for a number of years and the society has used by sufferance, as it were, a part of the Art Museum building, which contains the magnificent George Walter Vincent Smith art collection.

The plan is particularly pleasing to the heirs of Mr. Wesson, as several propositions have been made for the final disposition of the property, and, when this plan is completed, it will assure to Springfield for an indefinite time, one of the most beautiful buildings in Springfield, if not in all New England, and will provide a home for the Connecticut Valley Historical Society, not equaled in this country. There will be no changes made, and none will be necessary.





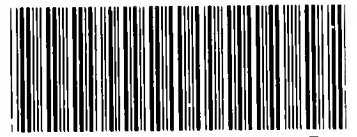


*Door, Southwest Chamber*





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